

CHAS

OFFICE OF CURRENT OPERATIONS

Bulletin

UP03B

R W

(SER LAW)

(BY HELEN THOMAS)

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- PRESIDENT REAGAN HAS DECIDED THE UNITED STATES WILL RE-ENTER INTERNATIONAL LAW OF THE SEA NEGOTIATIONS RATHER THAN ABANDON THE 8-YEAR-OLD EFFORT TO DRAFT A COMPREHENSIVE TREATY, AN ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL SAID TODAY.

THE OFFICIAL, WHO REQUESTED ANONYMITY, SAID THE ADMINISTRATION IS PREPARED TO SEEK SPECIFIC CHANGES IN THE 175-PAGE PROPOSED TREATY DRAFTED BY THE 150 PARTICIPATING NATIONS. A FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT WAS EXPECTED LATER TODAY.

THE DECISION FOLLOWS A LENGTHY REVIEW LAST YEAR IN WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION WEIGHED THE PROS AND CONS OF NEGOTIATING CHANGES IN THE DRAFT TREATY OR SIMPLY REFUSING TO SIGN THE LAW OF THE SEA TREATY.

THE UNITED STATES ANNOUNCED LAST MARCH IT WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN WHAT WAS TO HAVE BEEN A FINAL ROUND OF TALKS TO COMPLETE THE AGREEMENT BECAUSE THE ADMINISTRATION, THEN IN OFFICE FOR ONLY TWO MONTHS, HAD NOT HAD SUFFICIENT TIME TO STUDY IT. THE PULLOUT STUNNED OTHER PARTICIPANTS AND RAISED DOUBTS ABOUT THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS.

REAGAN'S DECISION TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS DOES NOT IN ITSELF APPEAR TO GUARANTEE A TREATY GOVERNING THE USE OF THE SEAS AND THE RIGHTS TO ITS RICH MINERAL RESOURCES FINALLY WILL BE DRAFTED AND SIGNED.

THE ISSUES ARE NUMEROUS AND COMPLEX AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S EARLIEST COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT TREATY POINTED TO SHARP DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE EMERGING U.S. POSITION AND THAT TAKEN BY MANY OF THE OTHER POTENTIAL SIGNATORIES.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE, SINGAPORE'S T.B. KOH, HAS SAID A DEMAND FOR MAJOR CHANGES IN THE DRAFT "WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO ACCOMMODATE."

ONE MAIN AREA OF DISAGREEMENT IS OVER ACCESS TO DEEP-SEA MINERAL DEPOSITS. THE DRAFT TREATY WOULD CREATE A GLOBAL AUTHORITY TO REGULATE THE MINING OF MINERALS FROM THE SEA.

ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ABOUT THAT PROVISION AND THE 1980 REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM COMPLAINED IT "INHIBITS U.S. EXPLOITATION OF THE SEA FOR ITS ABUNDANT MINERAL RESOURCES."

These comments represent the initial reaction of the Office of Current Operations
and of the appropriate production offices.

UPI #1 20 82 AF/EGZ REG

29 January 1982
Item #3

KH
FILE LOS
NSC